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13 Ramadan 1444

Response to Spiker

Hasan Spiker has written a series of interesting responses under the pseudonym Rufiat Mahmud Khan (although his twitter handle is Rufiat Ahmed Khan). It appears prudent that something be said in response, in order to clarify certain ambiguities, and lest Spiker believe he has resolved the issues I have raised. This response is divided into 6 parts, each pertaining to each of the documents uploaded by Spiker.

Response to Part 1

Spiker claims here that he affirms *kalām* is "valid in itself." But despite the fact that it is valid in itself, it is somehow not "capable of proving its own possibility." This is quite an odd statement. If a science is valid in itself, and the premises of its proofs terminate in non-inferentially true propositions, then the obtaining of such proofs is sufficient evidence of its own possibility, for anything that obtains is evidently possible. So, since the science *in fact* exists, then this is enough to prove its own possibility.

But if Spiker holds to the claim that *kalām* and other "non-exemplarist" philosophies are incapable of proving their own possibility, and that they "require a higher science" in order for their possibility to be demonstrated, then what Spiker has done is refute *kalām*. As is well known, according to its practitioners, *kalām – uṣūl al-dīn –* is the highest of the Islamic sciences and it stands in no need of any other science to ground it. The mere suggestion of restricting *kalām* to special metaphysics (i.e., theology proper) by some of the *mutakallimūn* infamously earned the ire of al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī in *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, who said that anyone who thinks this is either a *faylasūf* or a *mutafalsif* licking up the leftovers of the *falāsifa*.

Indeed, if Spiker is right, *kalām* is not vindicated or validated, it is in fact refuted. Nearly all of the premises of *kalām* turn out to be simply false, and yet we are supposed to believe that Spiker's exemplarist project is meant to support these sciences. I mean, for one thing, the *mutakallimūn* reject exemplarism: it is false in *nafs al-amr*. They also reject many other doctrines, such as philosophical monism, held by proponents of the philosophical tradition of 'Akbarianism.' For example, the mutakallimūn say: the world exists and it began to exist at some finite time in the past, prior to which it was absolutely nothing. On the views held by later Akbarians, and Spiker, the creation of the world has a radically different meaning: it is the manifestation of the absolute existence under certain qualifications, and that this self-disclosure is eternal. The list of radical points of contention goes on.

When I raised the circularity argument against Spiker's book, the purpose was to expose an even more obvious problem with his approach than the circularity itself, namely: Spiker has no interest in validating *kalām*. What he does appear to have an interest in is refuting it, and I think this is quite transparent. In other words, the part of his book which claims he is writing this text with the goal of 'vindicating' kalām and Avicennan philosophy is a marketing gimmick to motivate interest in his project, which ends with a radical reinterpretation of kalām which relegates it to mere social ritual at best, and not a real scientific enterprise.

In short, if exemplarism "vindicates" anti-exemplarist philosophies, then exemplarism vindicates its own refutation.

Lastly, Spiker claims that *kalām* is *vindicated* and "cleared from suspicion!" "What a world of difference!" Is "vindication" supposed to be a technical term? Who are the modern skeptics that – once they've been informed of the world of forms – have now been converted from their skepticism and are ready to accept *kalām*?

Response to Part 2

The second response by Spiker misses the mark. I will restrict the discussion to two main points.

(1) On page one, Spiker exclaims with his usual zeal: "Mihirig strawmans Spiker by imputing to him the absurd doctrine that an everyday proposition like "Zayd lives in California" *can only be **known** to be true* by 'looking at' the Immutable Archetypes!"

If you read the paragraph he cites, however, there is nowhere where I speak of knowledge at all. What I am speaking about is *nafs al-amr*, which is not a theory about *how we know*, it is a theory about *what makes propositions true*. It is a theory about *truthmakers*, it is *not* a theory about "intelligibility." Spiker runs these two notions into each other throughout the book. He has plenty of time to make an excursus on other topics, but not once does he explain the difference between "what makes something intelligible" and "what makes something true." What makes it true that Zayd is in California is the fact that Zayd is in California. What makes it *intelligible* that Zayd is in California is about what is it about what kind of properties that object of knowledge possesses (i.e., is it knowable by virtue of some universal properties it possesses? Because of its participation in some platonic forms? Or is it knowable all by itself, because those universal predicates actually are linguistic devices that are grounded in particulars?) Spiker's entire response is thus void, because I am speaking about grounding truths, and he is speaking about intelligibility.

(2) The second point is a technical one, not subject to this or that interpretation; Spiker is simply wrong on this point, and everything he bases on this is also false. On page 8 he writes:

> "This is Ṭūsī *identifying*, yes *identifying*, what *nafs al-amr is* (namely, the separate, immaterial, transcendent Agent Intellect)! Mihirig would want to counter that the Agent Intellect is just another form of mental existence, allowing us to remain within the rubric of extramental particular/mind for *nafs al-amr*. But this is just absurd *mukābara*, because *obviously* when we negate that *nafs al-amr* is the mind, we mean immanent minds, i.e. individual human minds…. So, if he wants to interpret the Agent Intellect as a kind of Mind, well and good, but this is completely irrelevant to the negation of *nafs al-amr* being a combination of extramental particulars and the mind."

He then writes on page 9-10, with typical theatrics:

> "Want to hear the negation that *nafs al-amr* is the mind and extramental particulars in their own words? Ahlan wa sahlan! The first is Ḥillī, page 58:
>
> (Citation of Ḥillī)
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> 'During some of my sessions benefitting from [al-Ṭūsī], this point came up, and I asked him the meaning of their saying that true mental judgements are [only true] in so far as they correspond to *nafs al-amr* – but that by *nafs al-amr* either mental subsistence or subsistence in extramental particulars [and nothing else] is understood – [this] given that he [al-Ṭūsī] had rejected [the

> correspondence of mental judgements] to either category in this part [of the *Tajrīd*]. He said 'by *nafs al-amr,* the Agent Intellect is meant. Every form or judgement that subsists in the mind and that corresponds to a form impressed in the Agent Intellect is true, and if it does not [correspond to a form in the Agent Intellect] it is false.'

Now, it is clear that in the context in which Ṭūsī is speaking, he is speaking of sublunary intellects (i.e., human minds) when he refers to 'the mind'. But we also know that at the beginning of the *Tajrīd*, as is well known, he says that existence is divided only into two types: extramental and mental existence. There is no third type of existence, over and above the extramental and the mental. *Nafs al-amr* is a catch all term whose extension covers every objective fact. Since there are only two kinds of existence, the only two kinds of objective facts are: extramental facts and mental facts. The difference is that Ṭūsī does not want those mental facts to be grounded in *human* minds, because human minds are fallible. But the Agent Intellect knows everything and is never wrong. So, when it comes to abstract predicates, we ought to ground them in the forms existing in the Agent Intellect. But again, this is not to suggest that things in the Agent Intellect have some special third *kind* of existence: *nafs al-amr* is still divided into only *two* types of existence; the question is which of those mental existents are the proper guarantors of those abstract truths: the ones in human minds or the ones in the Agent Intellect; but all the same, they exist mentally. Indeed, in responding to an objection to the theory of mental existence that presupposes that 'the mind' refers *only* to human minds, al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī – in *Ḥāshiyat al-Tajrīd* – writes the following:

> We do not intend by mental existence anything other than an existence that is distinct from primary existence which is the origin of effects and the locus for the manifestation of its properties (*maṣdar al-āthār wa maẓhar al-aḥkām*). Fire, for example, has an existence by which its effects proceed, and its properties are manifest, such as burning and lighting and so on, and this is called: concrete (*ʿaynī*), extramental (*khārijī*), and primary existence (*aṣīl*). On this [mode of existence] there is no disagreement. The disagreement is whether fire has another (mode of) existence that does not entail any effects or judgments, *irrespective of whether that existence is in **our** cognitive faculty or in another's, for the existence of entities in the **superlunary principles** is sufficient for [our thesis], and we have no need to affirm it in **our** minds*. This other existence is called: mental (*dhihnī*), derivative (*ẓillī*), and non-primary (*ghayr aṣīl*).[1]

In other words, mental existence is not a theory about human cognition, it is a theory about ontology: namely, that essences can exist in two distinct types of ways: a causally efficacious manner where properties are manifest, and a causally inert manner, where such properties are not manifest. This is all that is meant by mental existence, and it does not need to exist in human minds at all: if we affirm this existence in the superlunary intellects then mental existence is proven. Why is this the case? Because the theory of mental existence is just about proving an existence for essences that is distinct in the relevant ways from extramental existence. They have a role to play in the theory of truthmakers just as they have a role to play for knowledge, but the truthmaking function is the most important one. Of course, the theory is also premised on the rejection of the platonic forms as truthmakers, or alternatively, the rejection of the Basran Muʿtazilī theory of the non-existent essence.

Further note: even if Spiker had not been privy to these texts by al-Jurjānī, the same exact statements are repeated in a text he is allegedly an expert on, namely, Taşköprüzade's *al-Shuhūd al-ʿaynī*, where he

[1] Jurjānī, *Ḥāshiya ʿalā Sharḥ al-Tajrīd*, ed. Altaş et al, (Istanbul: Diyanet Vakfi: 2020) vol.2, 85.

repeats that the superlunary intellects are sufficient for affirming mental existence, explicitly citing al-Jurjānī.[2]

Just in case the above text– by the author whom Spiker superficially claims is an Akbarian – was not clear enough, let us look at another text by the same author from *Ḥāshiyat al-Tajrīd* regarding the relationship between *nafs al-amr,* mental existence, and extramental existence. He writes:

> If you ask: what is the meaning of *khārij,* and what is *nafs al-amr*, and what is the relationship between the two? I say: You know that existence has *two divisions*, a primary existence which entails external effects and in which judgments are manifest (i.e., concrete extramental existence), and a derivative existence that is not like that, and this derivative existence is inconceivable except in the cognitive faculties, and that is what it is called mental existence. Thus, primary existence can only be external to the cognitive faculties, and therefore, the external opposes the mind. As for *nafs al-amr*, it means the thing itself with respect to its own self, and what is meant is the thing itself. So, if we say, for example, 'something exists in *nafs al-amr*' it means that it exists itself, and its being existent with respect to itself means that its existence is independent of anyone's consideration or supposition. Rather, if all considerations and all suppositions are set aside, it would be existent, *and that existence is either primary* [i.e., extramental] *or derivative* [i.e., mental]. Thus, *nafs al-amr* includes external reality and the mind, but it is absolutely more general than external reality, for everything that exists externally certainly exists in *nafs al-amr*, and it is more general than the mind from one respect, for not everything that is in the mind is also in *nafs al-amr*. For if one believes that five is even, then it is false and does not correspond to *nafs al-amr*, while being existent in the mind. And that is why he said 'not with respect to what corresponds to what obtains in the mind.'[3]

Notice what the Imam says here: existence is of *two types*, not *three*. *Nafs al-amr* is not a special type of existence, it is rather the real or the objective parts of both of those two existences, as explained earlier. And as we saw from the previous text, this includes *any* intellect, including the superlunary intellects such as the Agent Intellect. When it comes to the knowledge of God, as I stated before, they refer to this existence as *sciential* or existence in knowledge, since there is no permission in the law to refer to God as having a *dhihn* or being an *intellect*, as the *falāsifa* take their gods to be.

In short: Spiker has misunderstood and misrepresented *nafs al-amr*. As a whole, given how poorly organized his book is and how many gaping holes there are in his description of the historical development of the theory of *nafs al-amr* and in his understanding of the concept and its relationship to mental existence, it seems that, when he started, he was already committed to an idea about intelligibility and the platonic forms, and he rushed to write a book about the topic before he was ready to write it. The result: an ad hoc book which, while claiming to educate me about *nafs al-amr*, does not even have in its bibliography the set of commentaries on Ṭūsī's treatise on the topic, the first such treatise dedicated to the topic in Islamic history; he also includes analyses of treatises which have been wrongly attributed to their authors; he also admits that he was ignorant of some major, well-known passages on the topic, such as that in *Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid*, until his dear friend Mustafa Styer introduced them to him. He seems to have picked up a short treatise by Taşköprüzade and tried to work backwards from it as quickly and haphazardly as he could to produce his book.

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[2] Taşköprüzade, *al-Shuhūd al-ʿaynī*, ed. Gul, 78-79.
[3] Jurjānī, *Hāshiya ʿalā Sharḥ al-Tajrīd*, vol.2, pp.201-202.

Response to Part 3

In this response, Spiker returns to his exaggerated claims of 'vindication.' Again I ask: if a proof works, why does it need vindication? What does the vindication add? If there are doubts about the proof, then they are doubts about it in particular, in which case they can be dealt with in particular. And if there are general skeptical doubts about reason or human knowledge for example, then such doubts can be addressed and shown to be self-defeating, although ultimately, one cannot *prove* in the technical meaning of the term, that first principles are true; that is because they are non-inferentially known to be true. When a skeptic attempts to undermine them, scholars deal with this by showing that skeptical arguments are always self-defeating, and this is discussed in all works of *kalām*. Thus, unlike Spiker's claims to the contrary, these sciences do engage with the possibility of human knowledge, both non-inferential knowledge and inferential knowledge, against unrestricted and restricted forms of skepticism. (Of course, it remains unclear what kind of a vindication ends up undermining the entire enterprise.)

When I said "the only assumptions for natural theology" are 'that there is a mind-independent reality' and 'we can know things about it,' there is no implication here that such assumptions are not justifiable. They certainly are, and they are discussed and justified by the *mutakallimūn* in all of their works. But the question is, are these propositions part of *natural theology* proper? No. The natural theologian justifies them in his capacity as an epistemologist with a discussion on the basic metaphysical claims that are entailed by that epistemology. Hence I said that the *particulars* of one's ontology are not important here after one's interlocutor has accepted that a) there is a mind-independent reality and b) we can know things about it. An atheist can accept these claims, just as any other non-skeptical person can; they can have an ontology of all matter, or all mind, or all immaterial substance; the particulars here don't matter. As I said, there is no need to have a *detailed analysis of ontology*. Such detailed analyses come *after* one has set the basic foundations for any such investigation. 'Oh dear.'

Response to Part 4

Spiker continues with further histrionics in his fourth note. In the first line of the citation he quotes on page 1, I write the following "Fourth, Spiker repeatedly speaks *as though* extramental existence is restricted to 'sensible particulars,' even though he is well aware that this is false (because, for example, God exists extramentally, but is not a physical existence." Notice what this means: (1) Spiker often speaks *as though* this were the case, despite (2) recognizing that *this is not the case*.

While this is plainly stated, Spiker then thinks he is refuting me by saying "Spiker *in fact does!!* State, more than once, that *khārijī* entities are not limited to sensible entities!" Does this statement contradict anything I have said? No, it just repeats what I have said in a different way. My point is that in many, many instances in the book, of which I cited only a few examples, he speaks as though extramental existence means sensible existence, which is simply false. The point of the critique was that Spiker does this in order to leverage his argument further, when he really need not do so. After all, if God exists extramentally, and is immaterial, and in God's knowledge are 'the immutable archetypes,' then these entities ought to be considered extramental insofar as they are in God's knowledge. But since Spiker has another goal in mind, he does not mention this *in the body of his text*, but he only tucks this recognition away in the endnotes. The question is this: why does he do this?

After presenting the citation I quote from his book, Spiker says: "As is entirely clear from the context of the section, this quote is not talking about 'being' as a self-evident concept, but about the claimed *positive* content of so-called 'being itself'!!!!!!"

Now, the suggestion that existence is not true of God is not an atheistic position, although it may sound like one taken outside of this context. Indeed, existence as a self-evident concept meaning 'being in individuals' (*al-kawn fi'l-aʿyān*) is routinely said to not apply to God by neoplatonic philosophers (including Avicennans here) and those who agreed with them. Instead, they say that there are two notions of existence: one which is the 'origin of external effects' and the other which is 'being in individuals.' Since Ibn Sīnā's conception of God is plausibly one which denies the latter and affirms the former, he is sometimes described as having a God which is akin to a platonic form. This view has some serious problems which I do not seek to get into here, but it certainly does not mean that Ibn Sina was an atheist; likewise, when people like Spiker state things that are similar to this, he also takes on those problems, but he is not an atheist. So much for having a bad opinion of people.

Just to substantiate this with some primary texts, take for example, Shirwānī's exposition of this view in his *al-Fawāʾid al-Khāqāniyya*:

> If you say: On this, then the Necessary Being (i.e., God) is not literally existent, but is rather an 'existence'. We say: If what is meant by 'existent' in linguistic usage is something to which existence accrues or existence relates, then it is not permissible to refer to [God] with this meaning; it is only permissible to apply the term (existent) to [God] to mean the 'origin of external effects,' for realities are not derived from customary linguistic usage. For language users apply terms in accordance with their understanding of meanings, so it may be the case that they have not understood some meanings, and so, they did not posit a term for it, or they understood it in an incorrect way, so they applied a term that corresponds to the meaning they understood, but which does not correspond to reality. *Reliance [in such cases] is proof, and what is followed is what is entailed by argument and direct observation, and the offensive nature of the expression (al-shanāʿa al-lafziyya*) *does not undermine the philosophical thesis*.[4]

Nevertheless, the view is incoherent and has several problematic entailments, but this is not the place to discuss them, and the offensiveness of the view is not merely in the expression. In short: it is very difficult to make sense of an Agent God who is void of any properties whatsoever, not even 'existence'.

It should be noted also that there is an ambiguity with the term *mulḥid* in the Islamic tradition: it is often used to refer to the Ismaili sect whose theology was broadly Neoplatonic. Since they denied nearly everything one logically or illogically can deny of God, they were referred to as *malāḥida* or *mulḥid* because of the extremes of their negation. This does not mean they were atheists. Another group, the *dahriyya*, are more appropriately labeled with our current understanding of the term 'atheist.'

Response to Part 5

There are also two points I'd like to make here. The first is getting repetitive, namely, the circularity and implausibility of the immutable archetypes as the referent of *nafs al-amr*. Recall that my claim was that a circularity can be derived in claiming the immutable archetypes in 'God's knowledge' are the referent of *nafs al-amr*. This is because God's existence is essentially prior to the immutable archetypes, and thus, to

[4] Shirwānī, *al-Fawāʾid*, ed. Ahmet Kamil Cihan, (Istanbul: Yazma Eserler Kurumu, 2019), 448-449

ground the truth of the proposition 'God exists' in something essentially posterior, such as the immutable archetypes (none of which is the immutable archetype of God anyway), is to ground the truth of a prior reality in a posterior one, which is absurd. Spiker cannot get out of this by claiming God's identity with His knowledge, because if they are indeed identical, then either they appear to lose their explanatory power in explaining why things are true, that is, if the knowledge just is God himself, then what does it add? And if they are identical in fact, and distinct in some aspect, then this aspectual posteriority is sufficient to derive the circularity again.

In the same discussion, Spiker makes another transparent gaffe. He writes (p.3):

> 'Against the dominant position of the *muḥaqqiqūn*, Mihirig makes it clear that he does not believe that *nafs al-amr* is the Divine Knowledge, and thus does not believe that our statement 'God exists' corresponds to the Divine Knowledge. But this is extremely creedally problematic, because it implies that Mihirig does not believe that God *knows* of His own existence.'

Obviously, knowledge of some fact is not identical to that fact. To deny that *nafs al-amr* is God's knowledge is obviously different from the claim that God knows everything in *nafs al-amr* (which, of course, He does). Likewise, that the knowledge of God encompasses every knowable item, necessary, possible, and impossible, does not imply that His knowledge *is* every necessary, possible, and impossible item, or that each of these entities exists somehow in His knowledge. (This is only true if one subscribes to some variant of Aristotle's theory of knowledge, namely, that the knowledge of F is for the form of F to exist in the knowing subject; and even on this view, it does not mean that those intelligible forms are the grounds of the *truths* of all the propositions in objective reality). So much for that, and for *taqlīd* of Aristotle.

As for God's self-knowledge, even on the views who accept mental existence in its myriad forms, they do not believe that God knows himself by virtue of a form in His knowledge or a form in any other intellect. Likewise, even human beings on this view know themselves without recourse to a form in their own mind. On their view, God knows himself by Himself, not by virtue of Immutable Archetypes or some other type of mental or sciential form.

One final note on his response to the circularity argument. Spiker writes (p.3):

> In keeping with Mihirig's usual standards of *naql*, Mihirig says his pseudo-shubha is mentioned in some of the books Spiker cites. I have checked the exact citation Mihirig mentions from *al-Shuhūd al-ʿaynī*, and there is *absolutely no sign whatsoever of this Shubha about the correspondence of* 'God exists'! Unfortunately, not really a surprise.

I thought a reference would be sufficient but it seems I have to spell it out further. It is true that these objections which Taşköprüzade cites pertain to the Agent Intellect, but it does not take much effort to see that some of them can be derived for the claim that *nafs al-amr* is God's knowledge.

For example, in this work on mental existence, Taşköprüzade discusses the arguments for and against Ṭūsī's suggestion that *nafs al-amr* refers to the forms existing in the Agent Intellect. The fourth objection to this theory is the following:

> ‘And fourth: because it becomes impossible to describe any knowledge prior to it – even if [only prior] essentially – such as God’s knowledge, with being true and corresponding to reality, because it is impossible for something to correspond to that which has no realization yet.’ (p.34)

So the objection here is basically that if being true means correspondence to the agent intellect, and correspondence of the essentially prior to the essentially posterior is impossible, then it would be impossible for God’s knowledge (which is prior to the AI) to be true, because its truth should also be prior and independent of what is posterior to it (the AI).

Now although this objection targeted the theory of the agent intellect, it applies in an analogous way to the claim that *nafs al-amr* would be God’s knowledge. This is because, as I said before, God’s knowledge is essentially posterior to God’s existence, and if the proposition ‘God exists’ is *grounded in*, i.e., is *made true by,* God’s knowledge of God’s existence, and God’s knowledge itself is essentially posterior to God’s existence – even if that is only by aspect – then the truth of the proposition ‘God exists’ is dependent on God’s knowledge, and God’s knowledge in turn is dependent on God’s existence, so God’s existence becomes dependent on God’s knowledge.

There is yet another problem which I mentioned in the article, namely, that clearly there is no immutable archetype of God, and it really makes little sense, even on the Akbarian system, to claim that God’s knowledge of Himself occurs by virtue of an immutable archetype in His knowledge. No one holds this view or any other analogous view to it.

So much for that. The second point has to do with Spiker’s hysterical and incoherent remarks regarding the ‘Ḥaqīqa Muḥammadiyya.’ Spiker claims the following:

> ‘the Ḥaqīqa Muḥammadiyya (prayers and blessings upon our Master Muhammad) *is only eternal because, like all of the other aʿyān thābita*, it is simply *one of the objects of God’s knowledge*!’ (p.4)

But also according to Spiker, in his book, the Ḥaqīqa Muḥammadiyya is *not* one of the ‘immutable archetypes’ but is rather prior to all of them, and is their source (p.126):

> The ‘first determination’ (*al-taʿayyun al-awwal*), which is *al-waḥda* (determinate unity) the unified principle of the emergency of multiplicity *upon which the unfolding of creation depends*, is *evidently* also accounted for in terms of unity, as the first finite determination of the infinite Divine plenitude (such that we might capture its metaprincipial intelligible unity in the term ‘infinity-limit’), and, indeed, the most perfect such determination possible, namely *al-ḥaqīqa al-muḥammaddiyya* (‘the Muhammadan Reality’), blessings and peace be upon him.

Spiker goes on immediately to say:

> The second determination, *al-wāḥidiyya* (unified multiplicity) represents the actual distinct emergence of the specific principles of all subsequent multiplicity, namely, the Immutable Archetypes as images of the Divine Names.

So, insofar as any of this is even intelligible, which version of Spiker should we believe? Rufiat or Hasan? Is ‘the Ḥaqīqa Muḥammadiyya’ just like any other of the Immutable Archetypes? Or is it ontologically prior to all of them and their origin?

Then Spiker makes an even more infantile statement, by equating the denial of the eternality of the *Ḥaqīqa Muḥammadiyya* with the denial of God's eternal knowledge of the *Ḥaqīqa Muḥammadiyya*.

Response to Part 6 and 7

Lastly, Spiker claims that I claim he is the originator of the thesis, but this is not the case. It is true that some scholars in some contexts, such as speculative writings of philosophical sufism, or some writings on tafsir, use the term *nafs al-amr* in a special technical sense to refer to God's knowledge or the Preserved Tablet, and so on. But when it comes to offering us a theory of truthmakers, the usage of *nafs al-amr* is developed differently. It is this rigorous sense which we find in the works of *kalam* or *falsafa*, and to try to use one as an alternative to the other is simply a mistake. Surely one must say that everything in *nafs al-amr* is known by God, but as I said earlier, it is another to say that every proposition is made true because it corresponds to God's knowledge, or even less plausibly: because it corresponds to what "is in" God's knowledge (for surely impossibilia, which are knowable, like 'nothingness' or 'the oddness of four' are known in the appropriate respect, but they do not exist anywhere at all). So in some context, it is rather appropriate to refer to God's knowledge as *nafs al-amr* in the sense that God's knowledge is exhaustive of every knowable item, but in the strict philosophical sense that matters in a theory of truthmaking, then this is not what is intended by the term, nor does it make sense to think that it is.

So, it does not matter here who originates the theory – Spiker surely has not originated anything.

Then Spiker cites a list of scholars who he claims agree. The first is important, namely, the Shaykh Ibn 'Arabi. In the citation, however, he is speaking about non-existent possibles. The scope of *nafs al-amr* is far more general than simply knowledge of non-existent possibles. It also includes necessary beings and impossibles. The fact that Ibn Arabi here uses the terms *fi nafsihi* does not mean anything that Spiker wants it to be.

As for #8 on al-Sayyid al-Sharif al-Jurjani, the abovementioned citations should be enough to know what his actual theory is. As for a dictionary of technical terms such as the *Ta'rifat*, which I personally have not found much positive evidence for its authorship, this is not where one goes to find out the scholar's beliefs about the theory. Notice how small the entry is on the question: there is no philosophical discussion there at all. Other terms often held to be synonymous with *nafs al-amr*, such as the term *al-wāqiʿ*, can also be found in the *Taʿrifāt*, where he says "according to the mutakallimūn, it is the Preserved Tablet" and "according to the *hukama* it is the Agent Intellect." What is going on here? These terms like *al-wāqiʿ* are often said to be synonymous with *nafs al-amr*, and we saw that according to at least some of the *hukama*, the Agent Intellect is 'nafs al-amr,' so why doesn't the author also mention the view that *al-wāqiʿ* is God's knowledge, for example? It seems the most one can derive from such minimal statements is that these are simply references to various technical usages of the term and not a theoretical exposition of the concept. Either way, not much can be derived from this about what his opinions are – unlike his actual discussions as cited above in his most scientifically demanding texts.

Notice also that in the *Ta'rifat*, under the term '*al-haqq*,' the author states that 'according to the scholars of semantics, the meaning of *haqq* is a judgment which corresponds to reality (*al-wāqiʿ*)…' but those who know, this entry is a word for word copy from Taftazani's *Sharḥ al-'Aqaid*, and the discussion really originates in Ibn Sina's *Shifa*. A similar definition is indeed at play in semantics, but it is curious nonetheless that the citation is taken from a work on *kalam* (indeed there are other cases where they are taken word for word).

So there are many curiosities in the *Ta'rifat*, and there is no explicit mention of the author at the beginning, so even if the attribution become widespread, I think more evidence is required to establish authorship. And even if we assume authorship, it is quite clear that he is citing the words of others and not presenting his own theories. In any case, when a researcher attempts to verify the position of a scholar, they should compare and contrast with what he says in his actual scientific works.[5]

Perhaps one final comment is in order. Among the scholars that Spiker cites is al-Bannānī. In his endnote, Spiker writes:

> 'Bannānī goes on to explain the two meanings of *kharij* (the first and less common usage being synonymous with *nafs al-amr*, and the second, standard usage, denoting extramental, individual particulars). He then alludes briefly to different theories of *nafs al-amr*: i. a thing as existent and actualized in itself ii. The knowledge of God. iii. The Preserved Tablet.'

Sadly, if one actually looks up the citation, one finds some crucial information that is missing from Spiker's summary. Let us just read Bannānī directly, who is commenting on a point of contention between al-Laqqānī and al-ʿAbbādī:

> 'And what [al-Abbadi] mentioned on the meaning of *nafs al-amr* is the strongest view, as mentioned by al-Sayyid [al-Jurjani], so the meaning of something being existent in *nafs al-amr* is that it is existent and realized in itself. So, the term *amr* in their statement '*nafs al-amr*' is a replacement for the pronoun, that is, *nafsuhu*. And it has been said what is intended by *nafs al-amr* is God's knowledge; and it has been said: the Preserved Tablet.'

So, notice, Spiker's statement 'alludes briefly to *different* theories of *nafs al-amr*' he includes 'a thing as existent and actualized in itself' when in fact, this is not a *different* theory than what was mentioned before, but merely restating the same view, with the added detail that it is also the view of al-Jurjānī, which Spiker does not comment on, who insists on holding on to the *Ta'rifat*. Second, Bannānī states that this is the correct view, and the *amr* in *nafs al-amr* is a replacement for a pronoun; so as I said in my article, all that is meant when we say 'the thing itself' is not some other thing, in some other loci, but whatever it is we happened to be talking about (i.e., the subject of the proposition), *independently* of what we believe about that thing. Then Bannānī opposes the correct view to the other views by the verb *qīla* (it is said), meaning these are the weak opinions. (As I said earlier, a plausible view is that there is more than one technical usage of the term, and Spiker has run them into one another.)

Despite this, Spiker makes a rather odd statement in his reply. He says (p.5):

> Al-Bannānī (mentions the position, does not necessarily adopt it, although he may well have although this is not evidenced here).

[5] Spiker concludes by demanding: 'Tūb ilā Allāh!' ('Repent to God!') Well, my friend, at this point I should not be surprised at anything, but the imperative form of the verb tāba yatūbu has no *wāw*, as it similar to the jussive, so repent from this added letter.

Oh dear. It seems that actually, his view is indeed evidenced here and he does adopt it quite clearly, but sadly Spiker has either not read him, or not understood him, or he has deliberately misrepresented him. I think the most likely option is that he has not understood him.

I understand it is hard to handle public criticism, but it is necessary for anyone who publishes books for public consumption. Alas, it would have been a great opportunity for Spiker to show us how connected he really is to the agent intellect but it seems his reception is weak.

And God knows best.